



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Fox- Autumn Leaves -1873

C
8344
44.20



C. 8344.44.20

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY



THE GIFT OF
HAVERFORD COLLEGE LIBRARY
HAVERFORD, PENNSYLVANIA





AUTUMN LEAVES:

A CONTRIBUTION

TO THE

CONFERENCE OF 1873.

BY

J. J. FOX.

*"Rebus angustis animosus atque
Fortis appare."*

TO BE HAD OF THE AUTHOR, LORDSHIP ROAD,
STOKE NEWINGTON;

AND OF

SAML. HARRIS & CO., 5, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT, LONDON.

1873.

Price One Shilling.

C 8344.44.20

✓

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
JUL 9 1935

LONDON:
E. BARRETT AND SONS, PRINTERS,
MARK LANE.

M

AUTUMN LEAVES,

ETC., ETC.

OCCASIONS arise now and then when it becomes a religious duty to speak out, and the coming Conference, "seriously to deliberate on the present state of the Society," seems to be of sufficient importance to call for the earnest expression of whatever views an individual has been led to form in the course of his reflection and experience. The following conclusions have not been hastily formed, but are the result of many years' anxious consideration and no small experience of the actual working of our Religious Society. They will, I believe, meet with some consent, but where they do not they may be useful in suggesting inquiry to minds that are honestly concerned in probing these difficult matters.

There is much to be said in favour of this Conference, and flowing as it did from a religious concern of the Essex Friends, the Yearly Meeting could hardly do other than institute it. We all hope that some practical suggestions will be its result; but its success must greatly depend on the self-discipline of those that attend it. There will no doubt be in many minds, perhaps in all, a sense of the great importance of its deliberations, and, no doubt, earnest prayer that it may be helped, and that our

Heavenly Father may bless it by the presence of His Spirit in the midst. May this be an abiding feeling from hour to hour, even amidst the intellectual warmth that is sure to arise in hearing views that elicit feelings of assent or the opposite. Let all bear with one another, granting to every one a full and fair hearing, and each setting the example of expressing briefly, without oratorical display, and without repetition, what he has on his mind to say. The Clerk may be trusted to act with impartiality, and will, no doubt, often have to impress on speakers the value of time, but I hope on every point that arises there will be free opportunity for every one to convey his sentiments.

I may be allowed, perhaps, to express a hope that the Conference may be spared much of that expression, too common in our Yearly Meetings, that the cause of our weak state as a Society is "lack of individual faithfulness." This, or some form of words bearing a similar meaning, is constantly alleged. It is perfectly true;—we all know it, and should feel it. It is the part of a spiritual ministry to bring us to the feeling of it, and keep it on our hearts. But, as a cause of our weakness as a Church, it is a *truism*, that explains nothing and leads to nothing. It only shifts the question to other words,—What is the reason that a religious body professing to believe in our Saviour, meeting week after week for religious worship, endowed with such a legacy from the past, as we are, should be, after 200 years, manifesting the signs it does of decay as a Church? Were we individually faithful, it is true, it would not be so. Why has this Church not been blessed in a larger number of living, self-denying, dutiful members?

That is the question; and to that question the answers are almost endless. Every part of our constitution as a Church;—the details of our mode of worship; our social position; our relations to the world without;—all are criticised and discussed, and assigned, often with much reason, as causes of the decline. Different minds seize on different parts that circumstances have happened to impress upon them, and turning the magnifying

glass on those several parts elevate them into the rank of important causes. The result is a perfect kaleidoscope of variety, lively and brilliant for the time, but neither forming a perfect picture, nor enduring. There must be deeper thought than this before anything like reconstruction can take place. Destructive analysis is comparatively easy, and many think it has gone on too easily amongst us the last thirty years. It is now to be seen whether, under Divine help, there is wisdom to build up and preserve those blessings which we believe were intended to be perpetuated and conveyed through the instrumentality of a Church.

One of the signs of decline of late years,—a painful one, because it does not affect the lax or indifferent, but belongs to the working of our disciplinary meetings, and therefore affects even our weighty and experienced leaders,—is the excessive leaning on *technicalities*. It seems to me that every question should be met on its own grounds. But when a question arises, an effort is made, generally successful, to avoid decision on the *main issue*, and take refuge in some merely technical judgment. That there may be reason for this on some rare occasions is possible, but it has grown bit by bit into an almost inveterate habit in our meetings. Instead of looking the question fairly in the face, seeking to know the Divine will, and deciding, *Is this thing right or is it wrong?*—things are evaded, ignored, pretended not to be seen, until meetings, and sometimes even the Society itself, become placed in a dilemma.

Of course things *healthy in themselves* are by this means suffered to become warped, and many things *unhealthy* are permitted to grow until they become too strong for the Church to deal with without something like distress or convulsion. But what I wish to dwell on is the deteriorating effect of this bad habit on our spiritual state. There is, to a certain extent, a want of reverence for transparent *Truth* engendered by it; and I have known instances of even earnest and sincere Friends making an assertion that is *technically* true, but not *really* so, since

it is not true in the sense in which it would be generally understood.

It has been a question with me whether our having listened from childhood to the answering of the *Queries*, in which we are told exceptions must be only those of which the Overseers have *official* knowledge, may not have contributed to this gradual lowering of the standard of truth. As soon as a youth becomes old enough to know anything of his fellow-members he comes away from these meetings with a sense of their unsatisfactoriness. As he grows older he gradually becomes used to it, and his sense of truth sinks by degrees to the artificial standard thus created.

Again, with regard to the reading of the *Advices* on First-day mornings, after our meeting for worship, look at the great pains taken that it should be distinctly announced that our meeting is *concluded*. This is done for the purpose of making it easier to a section of the Society who do not sympathise with the *Advices* being read to the congregation; but what difference does this make? Our meetings are public, and for whatever is read or announced at the close the Society is responsible. Notwithstanding an Elder rising and saying the meeting is "concluded," the public feels that it is not so, because the Friends do not go away. This is using a technical distinction that the uninitiated cannot understand, and, consequently, it is grating to their sense of simple Truth.

Now, is it not on record that simple guileless *truthfulness* was the unvarying distinction of the founders of our Society; that, strong in their reliance on the immediate perception of their Saviour and enlightener in their hearts, they were able to move among their fellow-men with—yea, yea, and nay, nay,—and bear a witness to truth that the world did not easily forget? Is there not as much need of that witness now? Look around on the newspapers, on commerce, on social life. Was there ever more need of a body that should uphold,—and so difficult is it, that without Divine assistance it cannot be upheld,—a firm, uniform, and consistent adherence to integrity, both in word and deed.

CHRISTIAN WORK.

Foremost among the new developments of our Society during the current generation, is that which is called, by an improper limitation of the phrase, *Christian Work*. It means going out into the highways and hedges, the dense parts of our cities, the abodes of the poor, the ignorant, and the depraved, preaching to them the good tidings of our Lord and Saviour, teaching them, and in some measure endeavouring to guide and lead them to a religious life. We all know the great fact, that this work, scarcely begun twenty years ago, is now pursued with zeal by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of our younger members. And in a large number of cases this service is blessed to the workers,—“He that watereth shall be watered also himself.” I thankfully believe that it is both an outcrop, and a cause, of the livelier spiritual state existing among our young men and young women than was the case thirty years ago.

Yet it is lamentable to think that the Society as a Church has shut its eyes to this work; has been afraid to look boldly at the question, Is this work of the Lord, or is it not? but has contented itself with the feeble policy of ignoring it, until it has now grown so large, and so many interests are involved in it, that the difficulties of linking it to our Church organisation are now very great. Yet, if the Church is to continue to exist, it *must* be done. All that relates to the religious welfare of its members is the business of a Church, committed to it by its heavenly Head, and it cannot escape the responsibility for its neglect by simply shutting its eyes to its duties and allowing things to drift.

What would have been the influence of this “Christian work” upon the Society as a Church organisation, if a few years ago it had linked it to itself, given its members help and encouragement, and identified the Society with the holy cause of spreading

the knowledge of Christ among the masses, it is now useless to consider. At present, in its anomalous state, neither recognised nor forbidden, its influence is rather adverse to the prosperity of the Society as a religious body. Those who work heart and soul in it, to whom it has become the great duty of their lives, reflecting how little the Church to which they belong has aided them in it, can hardly help having their reverence for that Church lessened. Where is the practical value, in their eyes, of a Church organisation which holds itself aloof from the very work that the earnest followers of Christ, from the day of Pentecost, have always felt it their duty to pursue? And, what is worse, a feeling has grown up, and is very commonly diffused among them, that the outward organisation of a Church is needless—that it is not wanted—is rather a hindrance in the way. I believe that, as they grow older, many of them will alter their opinion. They will come to see that however organisation may be overdone, and may thus cripple the Church, yet that for the needs of man, for his pastoral care, for his Christian fellowship, some organisation is imperatively called for. Without it the labours of the missionary, however successful at the time, are merely transitory in their effect. To the want of it we cannot help partially ascribing the fact—that some in these days are confessing with discouragement—that so small and inadequate seem the results of the Revivals and Christian labours of the last few years.

It is evident that the existence of this feeling of indifference to the Society among so many sincere and Christian minds is a loss of strength to us. It is difficult to get them to attend our meetings for Discipline, or take a part in the affairs of the Church. So far this "Christian work" is a force that tells against, and not in favour of, the strength of the Society, and instead of being a vivifying element, as it should be, rather aggravates its weakness. But let us not forget that, while it may for the present be rather weakening than otherwise to the Society, it is quite possible for it to be in reality its greatest friend. It may

be gradually and imperceptibly nourishing the spiritual growth of the young men and young women who may become by-and-bye the pillars of our religious body. Whatever is favourable to the spiritual life of the individual must, in the long run, be for the benefit of the Church of Christ in general. Whether for *our* little section of that Church or not, depends on other circumstances of a delicate nature, to which it would be wrong not to allude, although space will not allow of their being adequately treated.

The one is that, labouring side by side with persons not belonging to our Society, joining week after week in worship with them, all that is peculiar to the Quaker is almost sure to wear away and drop off. Probably if it had a deeper foundation in their hearts it would not. But the fact is that it does. And although that which is peculiar to the Quaker is, much of it, unessential to the Christian, yet there is some of it which it is a loss to them to be without.

But a more important circumstance in this "Christian work," as at present carried on, is that its preaching and teaching is to a large extent pervaded by an incomplete conception of the great dealings of God with man, as unfolded in the Christian scheme. Valuable as far as it goes, it is, as compared with the views to be gathered from the best writings of the Society of Friends, only a very partial statement of the Grace of God through Christ bringing us redemption and eternal life. It seems to me that this imperfect understanding of the Gospel plan tends to cripple the work, and tends also to prevent the work proving such a blessing and strength as it might be to the minds of the workers.

MEMBERSHIP.

No part of the Society's constitution is more discussed just now than the grounds and conditions of Membership, and probably this part of the question will occupy a large share of the

attention of the coming Conference. It is a difficult matter, and the first wish that rises to the mind of one who is anxious for the future of the Society is that there may be no *hasty* legislation.

I have never been able to unite with the cry for the abolition of "Birthright Membership." This on two leading grounds: *firstly*, because whatever mode of membership may be substituted for it must in practice either become a matter of form (and so be Birthright Membership in another name), or must introduce evils from which I should desire our Church to be preserved. And, *secondly*, I think that those who wish its abolition have in their minds a conception of a Church or Congregation which seems to me erroneous, which I cannot find in the New Testament.

For reasons belonging to these two heads, I am not prepared to see Birthright Membership swept away. At the same time I fully acknowledge that the Society has greatly suffered, and is still suffering, from drawing so "hard and fast" a line. There is something really unchristian in the distinction practically existing between the Member and the habitual Attender of our meetings. Rightly considered, the Congregation is as responsible for the latter as for the former; and yet our Discipline takes no cognizance of him, and has only lately begun to inquire into his existence, and make of him an annual return. This has long been a truly blameworthy error of our organisation, of which we are now reaping the fruits.

To lessen the mischief of this boundary-line, there ought to be greater freedom both in the removal of a name and in reception. The former—or discontinuance of a Member—has been so long used as the punishment of delinquency, that it is very difficult to get rid of the unpleasant association. And yet it is now often employed, when the overt act which calls it forth is really a praiseworthy one,—such as for one living in religious indifference (a mere nominal member of our Society) to join some other congregation, or to contract a marriage, suitable

in itself, although not with one in profession with us. Often has a Monthly Meeting, while as individuals approving the step the delinquent has taken, yet, as a meeting, disowned him for his fault! It need hardly be said that such a position is neither beneficial to the moral sense of that meeting, nor does it raise the Society in the estimation of its former member.

There ought, therefore, to be, and there is gradually growing, a habit of discontinuing the membership of a Friend, with expression of affectionate interest, and carefully guarded from the least imputation of delinquency. This should be more freely used than it is; the retention of merely nominal members of full age being neither good for them nor for the Society. But, at the same time, there ought to be much freer *admission* than there is now. We have no right to exact from persons entering our Church a high standard of Christian attainment. If we do so we are not only running the risk of encouraging exaggerated feelings, perhaps even hypocrisy, but we are defeating the ends for which a Church is intended. Moreover, we are doing injustice, whenever an individual professes with us by attending our meetings year after year, is of moral conduct consistent with his outward profession,—and yet is kept beyond the pale. Such cases defraud the individual, but they do the Church an injury greater than the loss to him.

If, on these principles, membership became conterminous with the regular congregation (subject only to exception when the outward life was inconsistent with the Christian profession), I believe we should have an arrangement that would be freer from the many difficulties and inconsistencies that pertain to our membership at present, and that the body would embrace a larger proportion than it now does of *true* members of Christ, those who have known forgiveness through Him and are striving by the help of His Spirit to make their calling and election sure. In our disciplinary meetings I believe there would be more, not less, of that seeking for the guidance of our Holy

Head,—without which our Church government becomes a mere democracy.

Having now touched upon two of the leading matters that are occupying the minds of Friends,—the so-called Christian work, and the conditions of Membership amongst us :—having pointed out that the *first* is truly precious, both for the work's sake and for the labourers, but that it is not yet in a state that reflects strength to the Church to which they belong; and that, as regards the *latter*, it is not the mere doing away with birth-right, or attempting to make a pure Church by outward selection, that will meet the case, but rather, while building on the ancient lines, to be bolder and freer in admission and in the discontinuance of mere nominal members;—I will now look at some other points of our constitution and government that will probably come before the Conference.

When we turn to the Discipline of the Society, there is hardly any part of it that has not of late years been called in question. We were brought up to look on it as almost, if not quite, a perfect pattern of Church government. And, certainly, the men who framed it in the first generation of the Society showed a wisdom almost marvellous. It is a proof of the excellence of the framework that it is existing with so little alteration down to our day. It helped to keep the Society together during a time of much deadness. It has been able to resist the shock of erroneous doctrine. It has preserved a stream of faithful ministers of the Gospel and spiritual fathers for two hundred years.

Yet it cannot be said, now, to be *en accord* with the best spirit of the Society; and it is a nice point to decide whether this is from faults in the machinery, or from errors in its mode of administration. I will leave that question unanswered, and turn in detail to some of the separate points that have been discussed by Friends, and may perhaps obtain the attention of the Conference.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINISTRY.

There are many practical difficulties in the way, so soon as the clear spirit of discernment has become enfeebled, of conferring the recognition of the Church on those called to vocal ministry in the congregation. It is no wonder that this part of our economy has of late years been unsatisfactory in its working. In a large meeting some will be selected and placed in the station of Minister ; others,—not a few,—will go on in what they believe to be the exercise of their gift, publicly preaching and praying among their brethren for ten, twenty, or even thirty years, not only without recognition as Ministers, but almost without a word of encouragement or help. We are so used to it, that it does not now strike us much ; but if a person unacquainted with Friends were to hear of such a state of things they would be astonished that the congregations survive. And it is a fact that they are much injured by it ; that, on the one hand, those who might be valuable servants of the Lord are often bruised and maimed by the coldness and want of that assistance which the Church should render them ; on the other, that the congregations have to bear with a great deal of vocal interruption that there is not strength in the Church to take up and thoroughly sift. The large number of unrecognised Ministers up and down the country excited some attention a few years ago, and I think it was our late friend John Pease who felt very much the importance of it ; so much so that a Committee of the Meeting of Ministers and Elders visited the Quarterly Meetings upon it. I am not aware that they did much good, for the causes lie deeper than these mere casual visits could reach.

In London Quarterly Meeting they called the unrecognised together into one meeting at Devonshire House, gave them very excellent advice and general sympathy, and invited them to speak out anything on their minds. It need hardly be said that the

singularity of the position,—each suddenly recognising that he was not an individual only, but belonged to a class including brothers and sisters whom he knew by name;—although this feeling perhaps was instructive, it was not likely to make him or her free in opening the difficulties that had befallen him.

To return from this digression. It would take too long to describe the results of this painful feature of our meetings. I turn to consider what has been suggested by some as a remedy, the simple *abolition* of the practice of recognising Ministers by the Church. Now, in the first place it must be acknowledged that the separation of them as a class and placing them in a gallery at the head of our congregations are rather perilous arrangements, a little antagonistic to our principle of equality in the Divine sight, and in the case of some sensitive minds exposing them to danger. Yet acknowledgment, in the sense of encouragement and approval, has always seemed to me simply *due* to whoever is called to exercise a spiritual gift. I dare say many have noticed, as I have, how the ministry of a Friend has improved in strength, in power, and in weight, when he has had the sanction of his brethren. We are all earthen vessels, and as we need the assistance of one another, so the gift is hurt by chilliness and discouragement. Nor must we look for one character in the ministry. It is an advantage of our worship that it opens the door to variety. Different Ministers have different callings, and thus, in a healthy state, the various needs of a congregation would be met. The learned, the intellectual, the deeply spiritual, or the pouring out of a full heart for the benefit of the simple-minded, need not interfere with each other. And yet it is noticed that a certain style of ministry is expected,—that if it be a reflection of that already in the gallery it is encouraged and taken up; whereas if its style is rather new and unlike, it is looked critically on and feared. This is natural,—it being so much easier to receive and acknowledge that which we are accustomed to. But we ought to look deeper. If the Friend is of consistent life, and says nothing contrary to Scrip-

ture truth, the one great question we ought to ask ourselves is, Is he commissioned? Has he received from our holy Head a gift, be it large or small, for the service of the Church? If he has, we are responsible for him; and though we may injure him by not acknowledging that which God has acknowledged, it is we and our Church that are the greatest losers, through our want of faith and courage.

Before passing from this interesting and important subject, which I have by no means exhausted, I may be allowed perhaps to express my dissent from a view which I have heard from the mouth of a Minister, and which therefore may have currency in some minds. It is that there are some gifts that are so small, *that even though they come from the Master* they need not be recognised by the Church. This is perilous ground to take. There is no large nor small with God. The widow's mite weighed more with Him than the greatest gifts poured into the treasury.

ELDERSHIP.

That, as some are called to preach, so there are others called to help, to support, to hold up the hands of the preachers, is a fact that I suppose all that have thought on the matter will acknowledge. That with this call there is a gift,—a gift of sympathy, a gift of discernment, so as rightly to apply encouragement or caution,—is equally true. Nor is this gift needless in a Church. Human imperfection clings to the best instruments, and Ministers, older and younger, are open to the requirement of loving sympathy in their labours. But especially the young. And when we consider the struggle and deep baptisms that the soul has to go through in early yielding to apprehended duty, and the snares with which this path is often surrounded, it is a blessing to think that there have been loving hearts, men and women whom I could name, who have given themselves to this

service, and lovingly cherished and served the feeble servants of the Lord. A somewhat similar service may be rendered even to older and more experienced Ministers; and this service the Church has acknowledged by instituting the office and giving the name of Elder. So soon as a distinct office is created, and officers appointed to fill it, a new class of difficulties begin. The selection itself is sometimes a serious trial to the Church, however deliberately it is done. The very selection of a class looked on as superior in the Church invites apprehension. And when, as by degrees comes to be the case, age and character, and perhaps even (unconsciously) social position, come to be looked on as qualifications, rather than the call and the gift, the character of the office insensibly changes. Its action takes an official stamp. The want of special gifts and endowments leads them to lean upon one another, to act as much as possible according to routine and precedent, and at last to shrink from any action they can possibly avoid. This may seem a strong description, but I believe it will be felt by many of our members to be to a large degree a representation of the fact.

Perhaps no part of our disciplinary system is viewed with more dissatisfaction by the young. The one part of their functions that the Elders still diligently exercise is the watching over unsound doctrine,—an important function truly, but only a part of the duties of one called to assist the Minister. But except when this function is called forth, or except when some young Minister in his exuberance requires to be checked, the younger members of the body know but little of any services the Elders perform. The word “Eldering” is full of painful associations.

That some modification in the office of Elder will shortly be made, I think there is little doubt. Some years ago there was a very prevalent feeling that it would be wise that they should be appointed for a term of years, and not for life. They could of course be re-appointed if they were felt to possess the requisite qualifications. The change would have been a small one, and, looking at our state now, I feel regret that it was not made. I fear lest the combined effect of the two causes: the sense of their deficiencies, on the part of the body, and *their timidity* on the other hand, (for as individuals the Elders are much to be felt for), may cause all recognition of the office as a Spiritual call to be swept away. Though, as we are at present situated, this would be but little immediate *practical* loss, yet I think it would be an abandonment of a valuable principle in the constitution of all religious bodies, and that we should suffer in consequence.

PASTORAL CARE AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

There are two very important deficiencies of our Society in its present state, which will no doubt be frequently alluded to, if not specifically brought before the Conference: pastoral care, and the religious instruction of the young. These are not the same, although often a little confused together. By the first, we mean that special aid given to the individual members of the congregation, by private conference, by sympathy with their spiritual difficulties, and affectionate interest in their progress. It is obvious, on the one hand, that there is far too little of this amongst us; and it is obvious, on the other, that the service is one that demands considerable spiritual attainments and experience for its exercise. It is natural, therefore, that Friends feel a shrinking from offering themselves for the work, and yet it is a work without which the religious interests of the congregation cannot thrive.

So far as the work is done in other Christian Churches out-

side the Society—and in many it is excellently performed—it belongs generally, with the exception of the Wesleyan body, to the province of the Minister of the Congregation. I believe there are some who would like to see an institution similar to that of the Class-leader amongst us; but I confess, looking at the high character of the work—that of helping the spiritual growth of the flock—and also at the risk there is of injuring it by over-organisation, I should prefer that it be regarded as a part of the calling of the Minister. No doubt there are many Ministers who feel it to be so, and endeavour to do their part in knowing the congregation and speaking to them face to face; at the same time I think this point needs much greater attention, and that too many of them feel that the public appearance in prayer and preaching is, unless others are specially called for, the *sum* of their ministerial duties. Their call as Evangelists presents itself strongly to them; they do not feel or realise fully the office of Pastor. In a more healthy state, this would more generally form part of the ministerial call than it now does.

There have been many efforts of late in the way of giving religious, or rather Scriptural, instruction to the young, and the Society has fully woken up to the importance of this, though not yet satisfied as to the best mode of effecting it. Various meetings for reading the Bible, and First-day schools for our members, have been initiated, and have been attended with some success. This success is, as might be expected, much dependent on the energy and devotion to the object of the Friend who takes the chief weight of their management. For, after all, there must be some directing head, for discussion or conversation over Scripture (however reverently conducted) to be continuously profitable. For a party of young people, with limited experience, and not already instructed, to meet together and discuss a chapter in the Bible, though it interest at first, is not after a while felt to be profitable, and such gatherings do not keep up their interest long.

If I might venture a remark with regard to all these efforts

that I have known—a remark in which I know some dear friends do not see with me—it is that I believe these efforts would be more valuable and more enduring, if the great truth that *Religion is not to be taught* were more present to their minds. The intelligent acquaintance with Holy Scripture, the knowledge of the doctrines and history of our Religious Society, (doctrines which we reverently believe are those of the New Testament), are matters that all our young people should be furnished with. They can and ought to be diligently taught. But they are not Religion. They are only preparing the ground for the visitation of the Holy Spirit, either with or without human instrumentality. It is the yielding the heart to Divine Grace, and coming to feel the Christ that the Scriptures speak of to be *our* Saviour, that is the beginning and foundation of true Religion in the Christian sense. Then this furniture of the mind, this acquaintance with Scripture, becomes of unspeakable value.

Perhaps this may be thought a fine distinction ; but I believe that practically these efforts would be *more* valuable if the aim were not set quite so high ; if they were called meetings for *Scriptural* instruction, instead of *religious*. They should always be conducted in a reverent spirit, and always open to prayer or to exhortation flowing from the Life. At the same time they may be conducted quietly and profitably, without the strain that is sometimes felt, to create and sustain a devotional character which, if expected and artificial, is not felt afterwards to be beneficial to the mind.

FUNCTIONS OF THE MONTHLY MEETING.

In the constitution of the Society, the duties that are placed on the Monthly Meetings are of the most important character. They determine *membership*—whether such and such individuals shall become members of the Society, or such and such members

shall be disunited. They appoint to all *office* in the Church. And, thirdly, they have the power of sanctioning or of not permitting the *exercise of spiritual gifts*. I say "not permitting," although practically it does not amount to so much; but their exercise *against* the discouragement of their friends is unsafe, and acts unfavourably on the Church.

Now these three functions are of great importance to the individuals concerned, but they also materially affect the welfare of the meetings comprised in that Monthly Meeting, and not only so, but operate on the whole Society.

It is a very grave question whether, in the present state of the Society, Monthly Meetings wisely exercise these functions. Many of them have become very small, and, as small meetings, are liable to come under the influence of two or three Friends who have ability, or technical readiness, or practical experience. Without bringing any charge against such Friends, it is our duty to look at human nature. We are all fallible and imperfect, and liable insensibly to have our judgments biassed.

Do we not frequently read of a valued brother or sister passing to their rest, at mature or even at advanced age, who have manifested their Christian character around them, who have been beloved in their neighbourhood, and yet whose talents (commissioned to them by their Heavenly Father) have not been brought into the service of the Church? The meeting in which they reside has not profited by them as it should, and, what is more, the Society at large has missed them. Their service has been shut up.

Now it is easy to say, and doubtless the thought generally occurs, this dear Friend no doubt had some defects of character that we, if we had lived in his Meeting, should have known. It is very likely true. Perhaps we inquire and find that it was so. It would be strange if a good reason could not be found for any case.

But when we consider that the Monthly Meeting itself is

only composed of fallible men and women,—that they are few,—that they are liable, like the rest of us, to be prejudiced, I confess the thought has often come to me at the grave of a brother or a sister, whether it was most his fault, or that of his Monthly Meeting, that his services have been lost to the Church.

I believe it would be well if the Society looked this source of weakness firmly in the face, and entrusted such important duties as I have mentioned to Meetings of a larger area.

DOCTRINE.

This word has been linked with so much of heart-burning and distress in every branch of the Christian Church, that it is difficult to hear it or to write it without painful associations. Yet we cannot form in our minds identical conceptions of God's providence, even though the same evidence is open to us all; nor can we form identical conceptions of God's gracious scheme of salvation through Christ, even though the same sacred pages are before us all. And, even if the conceptions approximate, the words in which we clothe them are liable to make them divergent.

And the difficulty is increased by the limit of our minds. As in the Material world there are mysteries abundant, questions at every turn, of which we in vain seek the solution, so in the Spiritual world, as revealed to us in Holy Scriptures, there are depths that we cannot fathom, and a scope that our limited faculties are unable to embrace and comprehend in one view.

So that we must not be surprised when we find earnest, sincere minds—even those that have yielded themselves to the Spirit of Christ, and endeavour to lead lives of prayer—unable to grasp the whole of the great scheme, and dwelling on that part which has presented itself most strongly to them, or has happened to be most blessed to their souls.

But however undesirable it is to expect completeness of view on the part of individual minds, and however unnecessary it may be to the INDIVIDUAL Christian, that he should be able intellectually to grasp and to express in language the whole scheme of God's dealings with man, it is otherwise with the Church. For a Church to prosper, there must be prevalent within it, as shown by its writings and its ministry, not only a sound but a comprehensive grasp of the Divine message and its practical bearings. To few individual Ministers is given so large a gift; when it occurs it is very precious. But to different Ministers it may be and is committed to dwell on various parts of the great whole. And thus the Church is edified.

Is our Church at the present day blessed with that largeness and fulness of Christian doctrine which we believe essential to continued prosperity? Two generations ago, I think we should most of us agree, it hardly was. There may have been spiritual life; there may have been sound preaching; but some parts, and vitally essential parts, of the teaching of Christ were not fully expressed, but were tacitly assumed. An example will illustrate. It happened to me, as a child, to stand by the death-bed of an aged relative,—an esteemed Minister of our Society. Her dying advice to me was comprised in these words, "Take heed to the Inward Monitor." It was precious advice, and not soon forgotten. But is it in these words that a Minister of our day would take leave of a youthful relative? Surely not. We can imagine how differently worded the dying advice would be. Each precious in its way; but the difference between them marks a remarkable change in the view that is prevalent amongst us of Christian doctrine. I believe that it is not only a change for the better, but that it is a change that was deeply needed: that the preaching of pardon of our sins through Christ, of our salvation through His death and resurrection, was wanting in the Society then, and led to much deadness of soul. What we have to watch over now is that this preaching of Christ, the chief corner-stone, our pardon and redemption from sin,

should have its full accompaniment in presenting Him as our guide and Master, in making our lives holy and acceptable to God through Him. The coming to Him—the knowing repentance and forgiveness of sins—is the *beginning* of the Christian life. It is still the tender sapling, and has to grow by daily leaning on His Holy Spirit, by watching and by prayer resisting temptation, ceasing to do evil, learning to do well; developing, it may be, by Divine grace the Christian virtues;—but still a warfare to the end.

In this struggle, in this warfare, which every Christian has to go through, how much help may be afforded by sound Scriptural preaching. The snares of this world may be particularised and warned against. The aids to a holy walk may be dwelt on and earnestly recommended. The Christian virtues may be brought into prominence and faithfully inculcated. All this without any derogation to the one corner-stone, Christ Jesus, the foundation of all. Yet is there not a lack of such preaching now? To take an instance that has often been before my mind. I can hardly recollect of late years hearing from the ministry of *self-denial*, and yet if I read the New Testament I find it there. Surely it is part of the duty of the Christian, both an out-crop and a help to his Christian walk. Without its practice there can be little progress in the endeavour to be like Christ.

It will be seen from these remarks that the impression with me is that, acknowledging the precious preaching of the Gospel that has revived amongst us, there is not quite a full conception of the bearing of the great Christian scheme on *practical life*. There are some recent signs amongst us that this view is beginning to expand, and that we may have a larger and more truly pastoral ministry ere long amongst us. If it be so, may the Divine Head accompany it, and bless it to the restoration of health and vigour to our beloved Society.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding this outpouring of some of my thoughts, called forth by the present crisis of the Society, I feel with regret how little one is able to contribute of a practical nature towards the correction of the weaknesses that exist. That something of value will follow the coming Conference I humbly trust, though it is difficult to see exactly what shape that "something" will or ought to assume. Even if one were able definitely to formulate it in one's own mind, and lay down a series of propositions, one would have to consider also the wide diversities of view existing within our borders—compared by some to a chaos of opinion—and estimate how far any such propositions have the least probability of acceptance. For any change of arrangement to act beneficially on the Society, it must be carried with some approach to unanimity. It must be the work, to a large degree, of the younger minds within our Church; shaped by them, though following, let us hope, the lines of thought suggested by experience. Their responsibility is now a very serious one. There is danger, on the one hand, of so feeling the difficulties, and being so much discouraged by the conflict of sentiment, that nothing be done, and the Society drift further in its course. There is danger, on the other hand, of hasty legislation. But I trust that, against both these, the Conference will be preserved by our Divine Master, whose kingdom on earth it will, I believe, be their great and paramount object to advance. Leaning on His guidance, they will be helped and will be enabled to see their way to the adoption of such measures as may strengthen the body, without any departure from the principles of that Spiritual Religion which was committed to us.

This support has been near us in former times of difficulty in the Society of Friends. It will not forsake us now. If waited

for, and daily listened to—using to the best our human powers under its Enlightening influence—we shall find it all-sufficient for our need. It will enable us again to be, what we must be to prosper—a militant, a testifying Church,—not a mere fossil on the shelves of Time's Museum.

The continued existence and welfare of our Church is very precious to many of us, and ought to be so to all. Shall we suffer it to sink into decrepitude, because we tremble and are afraid of digging deep into the principles that underlie it? or must we sit contentedly on the ruins, consoling ourselves with the glory that has been? No; there must again be the searching out and knowing for ourselves the deep workings of the Spirit in our hearts, the same discipline that our forefathers went through; there must be the willingness to spend and be spent in God's service as they were; there must again be the all-pervading *love* one to another, by which and through which they were built up a spiritual people, and shone a Light unto the world, until wealth and formalism came in upon them to mar their lustre, and lessen their usefulness to mankind. We are not bound by all they did, or all they said; but, unless we go back to their standpoint, we may still be respectable—perhaps useful,—but we shall not really be “the Society of Friends.” Their view of the dealings of God with man, under the Christian dispensation is as true now as it was then, and as applicable to man in the nineteenth century as in the seventeenth. The voice they raised against war, against ecclesiastical systems, and against luxury, is as much called for now as ever it was.

If this Church surrenders its simple view of the Divinely-appointed converse of man with God,—if it become hesitating in its voice of testimony and warning against the many errors of the age, it may still exist, it may still be one of the many sects into which Christendom is divided, but the great mission with which it is entrusted will be transferred to other hands more worthy of the charge.

This is what we have to fear. Oh! that it may please

Divine Providence to avert it. Oh! that we may perceive, before too late, how needful it is that each of us should take this warning to himself, and, holding fast the gift that has been committed, strive earnestly to revivify and renew.

It does, indeed, need the individual dedication of heart, individual yielding to service, and boldly putting the hand to whatever duty is called for. Self must be cast down or kept in abeyance. The will of our Heavenly Father above everything. Accepting and using gratefully His gifts, whether it be loving sympathy, or reasoning power, or intellectual foresight, or whatever the faculty He has given, remember that it is all from Him, that it is all to be used in His service, and that for its employment we are answerable. He will graciously guide and help its employment in answer to the prayer of the humble-minded. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

May the Spirit of Prayer be with the Conference! Prayer, which is the Christian's stronghold, *without* which he would be powerless before the world; *with* which he is enabled to stand his ground amidst trials. Men who live for this world alone, and men who are over-confident in their Science, understand it not. It happens at the present moment to be the position of our Faith, that they are most strongly assailing. Let us, as a Body, show by our words and our Practice that to us it is a precious thing, that intellectual difficulties ingeniously put together do not mislead us, but that we feel for it rather an increased value, as the most precious gift of our Creator and Heavenly Father, giving us access to Him, and helping us in all things, both little and great.

A LETTER

TO THE

FEMALE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY.

FROM ONE OF THEMSELVES.

MY DEAR SISTERS,

It is with feelings of very affectionate interest that I avail myself of this unlooked-for opportunity to take up my pen and address a few words to you, whom, I may truly say, I love in the LORD.

We meet, in our large gatherings, once a year; many of us recognising each other's countenances, while many more,—and their number increases each year,—meet for the first time.

Precious, indeed, thus again and again to cross one another's paths,—to sit together under that sweet canopy of Love, which is at times graciously permitted to overshadow us,—to be baptised together in the one holy baptism,—to partake together of the “living bread,” in the Presence of the Lord!

These are some of our life-long obligations—meat that will sustain us “for many days.”

Sympathising, as I warmly do, with many of you, in regret at

our not mingling with our brothers in this most important "Conference," which concerns us equally with them, in a Church acknowledging our one-ness and equality in all spiritual things ;—yet would I ask you to unite with me in seeking to throw aside any feeling of disappointment at what has been *permitted*, and to throw our souls now into the solemnity of the occasion. Let us remember that it is the hidden stones that support the Temple, and that theirs is no unimportant place, though out of sight. In this critical era of our Church it is no time for us to bestow a thought on ourselves ; we must help our brethren with our prayers, while they, amid discouragements and foes from without and from within, are banded together to "rebuild our wall." Oh ! when we reflect on what was accomplished by patient unwavering labour by that little handful of men, of whom Nehemiah tells us, in spite of the "scorn" and "indignation" of their enemies, ought we to doubt that efforts made like theirs, with the mighty power of prayer, can fail us *now*, if like them, one of our hands be used in the work, and one to hold a weapon.

Yes, my Sisters, we also may aid in the rebuilding ; we may join heart to heart with our husbands, sons, and brothers in this Conference, and give them our prayers, our sympathy, and our counsel. They will feel our presence with them, though unseen ;—they will look to us for support and cheer in their intervals of rest.

Various weighty themes will occupy the attention of this Conference : shall we also give our thoughts, as Women Friends, to our own deficiencies, and consider how we can remedy them ?

First, as to our Meetings for Discipline. Might they not be warmer, livelier, less mechanical in their working ? "Order" is a beautiful thing ; but it is not our *only* aim in thus meeting together. *Love* should so cover all, that even when a dear sister (weak in judgment it may be, or young in experience), in her ardour to serve her Lord, may infringe what we call "right order," it feels to me a great responsibility to decline our aid and

sympathy as a Meeting merely on this account. Might we not separate two or three Friends to confer with such an one, and leave to their judgment the working or restraining, bidding them, as a Meeting, God-speed in such a loving service. It is now, however, so solemn a thing to bring forward any concern in our meetings, that it is scarcely ever done, except now and then by a "recognised" Minister; whereas our sisters *often have* such concerns, but they bear them alone, and do their work, *unaided* by the counsel and sympathy of their fellow-members. It has often felt to me, on such occasions, that in our endeavours to be perfect in this one quality of *right order* in our Church, we may press "under a bushel," as it were, still more precious things.

I remember, in past years, having sometimes seen the blessing of a more frequent settling into silence, than is the case now, in the intervals that will occur between the subjects brought before us, in our Meetings for Discipline. Sometimes a young or a timid member would then be strengthened to utter a few words, solemn, and, I can truly say, helpful to the meeting; or a concern that might have long rested on a mind would be shared with the sisters thus waiting together,—not perhaps such as might be felt called for in a meeting for worship. Well can I recall seasons like these, most soul-sustaining times, when, as the poet so aptly says—

"Lowly before the Unseen Presence knelt
Each waiting heart, till haply some one felt
On her moved lips the seal of silence melt,

Or, without spoken words, low breathings stole,
Of a Diviner life from soul to soul,
Baptising in one tender thought the whole."

The great need, it seems to me, that now overspreads our Meetings, our homes, our individual souls, is a greater fervour in all that we do. Sisters, let us join together in applying a close examination to our inner souls! Is all that we do done as

"to the Lord," and not unto men? Are we not too much afraid of what others will think of us, if we persevere in any path that seems pointed out, though it may appear to others new or strange? But if He, who has called us, go before us, why should we fear? Let us follow, and with every step He strengthens us to take, new power will be given. Were we enabled to keep within us this singleness of eye, this oneness of aim, to please our Lord in all we do and say, surely our Meetings would soon revive, and be delightful gatherings of earnest workers, whose prayer would be, "Here am I,—ready to go anywhere, to do anything." Such could not long be unemployed; work abounding, souls and bodies everywhere needing food, sympathy, love.

But I have heard some of you say, "I never attend these meetings; we have nothing to do; all the interesting work is done by the men." Is it not because we have failed in our duty that so it is? Do we ever originate anything, and, if needful, send it in to our men Friends for their sanction and approval? I can fancy that such action as this, if done under sense of duty's call, might greatly strengthen our hands. We have not to complain that our Brethren refuse us their sympathy and support, having rarely, if ever, tried them.

And now let those who are Mothers amongst us consider *our* part in the Church. Do we come up to our high calling? *We* it is who must first mould the young minds of our children;—how do we perform this duty? In the sight of their withdrawal from our Church, how do we feel? Are we clear of responsibility? Sisters! Let us not fear to look at these things; and, if we have failed in our duty, let us ask help to improve.

If our own minds are firmly convinced, as I trust they are, of the Spirituality, and purity, and simplicity of our Faith, as it has been handed down in the principles of our Society, is it not a delightful task to seek to imbue our children's minds with what we hold so precious,—to show them in the Book of Books the passages bearing on each of our views;—and, in humble prayer for His blessing, read, with them, our Lord's own teachings?

This is a precious work, and, choosing suitable times, let us also give them the simple record of what our forefathers meekly bore in giving this testimony to the world.

It seems to me that we can hardly begin this deeply interesting work too soon. The little child is quick to discern its Mother's mind; her example is its ever-present Ideal.

How soon does it learn (if only from a glance of her's) that it must resist that spirit of Evil which, alas! soon appears, even in Life's early dawn!

She shows it, even before it can speak, that it must *deny itself*; it is learning this lesson when, after a struggle, it resigns a favourite toy to a sister or a brother; and very teaching to the parent is the look of joy that then immediately beams in the infant face.

Oh! how blessed is the office of training this tender flower. Who amongst us feels equal to it? Who amongst us has rightly tended the precious thing committed to her charge?

Will the dear young Mothers accept these broken words on the subject of early training, in the love which prompts them? Education begins almost in the cradle, and the blank page of the mind soon seizes and feeds upon impressions from things around, whether from sights or sounds. Soft, loving tones, or harsh ones, are eagerly noticed, and produce their effects; and, in like manner, pleasing sights, or painful ones; and very sad to me is anything in the presence of a child, even in the form of a toy, that can arouse feelings of a hurtful character,—that can feed the root of evil in the little soul; such are pictures or toys of a warlike kind. Better far to adorn our nursery walls with pleasing images, and, as long as we can, to shield the tender mind from all ungentle emotions.

Years go on, and School begins; but the Education of our children is not confined to school. It is a work perpetually going on—in school, and out of school.

They are acute observers of our conduct and conversation; they compare what our example teaches them, with what our

precepts have taught them,—and blessed for them and for us if these two approximate! But if they hear us speaking as we ought not, or saying of another what we should not like that other to hear,—if they see us adorning ourselves, or them, with “the outward adorning,” and neglecting to wear “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,”—will they not be perplexed, and will not the Standard before them be lowered? These are solemn realities, and call for deep humility of soul; but let not our sense of weakness cast us down—rather lead us, in fervent prayer, to ask strength to “put on the whole armour of God,” that we be not taken unawares, nor suffer our holy Standard to be let down!

In glancing over the large sphere of Home influence, one feels overwhelmed at its importance, and we feel how our every act and word, being a reflex of the mind within, may carry its message of good or ill to those around us. As we all of us must have felt, there is a precious influence exhaling from those, who dwell near their LORD. I have even felt it, sometimes, as soon as I have entered their doors; the very atmosphere breathes the same. Should it not be our greatest aim thus to dwell, as underneath His wing, that nothing but sweetness may surround us?

Dwelling there, how the superfluities of life would fade into their true nothingness! How should we strive to raise our children's minds into a higher atmosphere! Tell them of the wonders of God's creation—the charms of Nature, innumerable—which, wherever they go, lie outspread before them, and, as their years increase and they become men and women, perhaps visiting foreign lands, or traversing the seas, how will their tastes range in fields into which we have sought to guide them, and often will they look back upon our teaching, whether it prove an element of strength or of weakness, in scenes of danger or temptation where our eye can no longer follow them! Oh! the vast responsibility that lies at our doors! Have we fed the love of vanity and worldly things, or have we striven to keep

glowing within them that Heavenly beam which visits *all*—and which, if followed, will extinguish all that is less pure, and shine “brighter and brighter unto the perfect day?”

They should early learn their individual responsibilities—that they are members of a Church professing, perhaps, more highly than any other—that He, who presides over us, expects their devotion, the consecration of their will, and of all they have and are to His service.

In our present state of weakness, many Friends hesitate as to encouraging their young people to attend our Meetings for Discipline. But here I would ask you to pause, before you arrive at such a conclusion. Shall we not go with them, praying always that He, who sees our great need, will revive us again, and breathe upon the “dry bones” till they rise up a great and living army? Let our children share the exercise of our spirits, and they too may be employed in the LORD’s hand—He may anoint some of their young lips, as He hath done before, “with a live coal from off His altar,” and choose them as vessels in His temple.

If such be the case, let no lack of warmth in *us* quench the living fire in the young disciple, but let him feel our arm of sympathy sustainingly underneath.

A subject has much impressed me for a long time, viz., the habit we all of us insensibly acquire of looking for a certain conformity in one another to an ideal of our own, and not making allowance for those whose train of thought has, partly, it may be, from difference of external position, run in quite different grooves to our own.

We too often measure others from this standpoint, and, according as they are endowed, or not, with certain qualities with which we, or those we value, are gifted, and which therefore we highly prize, we more or less esteem them; whereas they may be possessors of *other* talents, more precious to Him who gave all, than ours; and He who takes note of all we do, will see the lack of charity in our hearts, and also see in them,

it may be, that lowliness of mind which esteems others better than themselves. There is surely room in the Church for *every*, even the simplest, gift. Let all be brought into the service, not one left outside. Where are our "hewers of wood and drawers of water?" Let us not shrink back at their approach because of their informality. Let not our repulse cause them to seek work and welcome elsewhere.

Oh! for a return to the simple earnestness of the early Church, where great variety of servants and offices prevailed; when, as the poet says:—

"For there was freedom in that wakening time
Of tender hearts—to differ was not crime;
The varying bells made up the perfect chime.

On lips unlike was laid the altar's coal:
The white, clear light, tradition-coloured, stole
Through the stained oriel of each human soul."

Let us, then (to resume our first idea), co-operate, heart and hand, with our brethren in this work of rebuilding.

There will be labours for us, abundant, all our future days, in our homes and in our Church; not much time to spare beyond these, no more time than our fathers had, for the pomps and vanities of this world.

"For here have we no continuing city"; we are on the wing, and, knowing not the length of our stay, should be watchful, first of all, to keep our "lamps burning," till the Bridegroom calls us in, to sit down with Him to His Marriage Supper.

Then, when our walk on earth is finished, and our children see us among them no more, Oh! may their hearts in sincerity feel, "She hath done what she could."

Ever, your loving Sister,

S. J. J. F.







3 2044 020 503 462

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED
AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS
NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON
OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED
BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE
NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE
BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

Harvard College Widener Library
Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2413



